



Media Action Inventory: Who's fighting for truth in the information war?

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This inventory has four categories into which media outlets or initiatives fall based on their potential effects on misinformation and/or disinformation:

1. Competitive
 - 1.A. Neutral Competitive
 - 1.B. Strategic Competitive
2. Delivering a Blue Narrative
3. Direct Counter-Messaging
4. Suppressive

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POTENTIAL EFFECT ON MISINFORMATION AND/OR DISINFORMATION:

1. Competitive:

These outlets have journalistic integrity and;

- a) *a mission of sustained introduction of appealingly mixed content, most anchored locally, and*
- b) *serve as vehicles (organically or by design) to engage audiences now largely detached from mainstream, national news coverage.*

1.A. Neutral Competitive

Local, largely legacy media outlets and their advocates

Extensive research demonstrates that [legacy local news outlets boost civic health](#). [Here's a good argument for mobilizing to support them as a category of news entity we christen "civic media."](#)

- o The news outlets themselves – as in this [directory of 1,000 local news outlets](#), this list of [hundreds of local public radio stations](#), outlets like the [Public News Service](#), distributing high-quality public interest news to rural audiences, [Cal Matters](#), reporting on the largest state and 5th largest world economy, or [States Newsroom](#), a network of 30+ newsrooms covering state governments, politics, and policy.
- o Investigative reporting: [ProPublica](#), an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest, including in a new [50 state initiative](#) to support local investigative news.
- o Organizations supporting local media outlets with:
 - § Technical, policy and legal support: the [Lenfest Institute](#), the [National Trust for Local News](#), the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#), [Free Press](#), [Rebuild Local News](#), Michael Moore's [Blue Dots in a Red Sea](#), a podcast that includes a how-to guide for creating a local news start-up, and [Community News Networks](#), activating community colleges and other trusted civic institutions as local news infrastructure.
 - § Funding, as in Press Forward, a [new effort spearheaded by the McArthur Foundation](#).
 - § Publicity: The above [directory of 1,000 local news outlets](#) was compiled by the [Media and Democracy Project](#)
 - § New approaches to local reporting: [America Amplified](#) is working with public media stations nationwide to expand the use of journalism practices that meaningfully address local information needs, especially in communities that have been traditionally underserved by public media. [The Documenters Network](#), an organization that trains people to attend and annotate government meetings, harnessing their collective knowledge, relationships, and capacity to create a powerful new information resource. Atlanta example: [Canopy](#).

1.B. Strategic Competitive

Start-ups seeking to engage audiences who underconsume reputable media. Note that audiences are not presumed to be partisan or to be political news consumers.

- [Courier Newsrooms](#) – Eleven state-based newsrooms providing local news content leavened with local lifestyle content to otherwise non-news-reading audiences via email newsletters, social media newsfeeds, and trusted social media influencers and messengers.
- [Civic Media](#), a commercial network of 20 local radio stations in WI with a mission to provide content focused on salient local issues and pastimes with journalistic integrity and thereby compete for audiences with right-wing talk radio covering the same locales.
- [Onyx Impact](#), a nonprofit organization founded to better serve and empower Black communities by fighting the harmful information ecosystems targeting them.
- [907 Initiative](#), a publicly funded communications hub in Alaska seeking to change the state's political narrative and hold its elected officials accountable.

- [Heartland Signal](#) - A regional digital newsroom anchored to the progressive radio station WCPT 820 AM in Chicago. Through a progressive lens, reporters and hosts shine a light on the issues most important to those who make up the diverse communities across the Midwest. Coverage relies solely on the facts, and aims to bolster local reporting throughout the Midwest region.
- [Report for America](#) – A national service program that places journalists into local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities. An initiative of the nonprofit media organization, [The Groundtruth Project](#).
- [Latino Media Network](#) is a new company that has purchased 18 radio stations in 10 cities and plans to be a content provider serving the Latino community over multiple platforms. (Note: No updates posted since 2022.)
- [Capital B News](#) is a Black-led, nonprofit local and national news organization reporting for Black communities across the country. Capital B's local bureau in Atlanta is the first in a growing network of local newsrooms anchored by Capital B's national hub. The Atlanta newsroom combines civic journalism, and accountability reporting, with an editorial strategy informed by intensive community listening and engagement with Black metro Atlanta residents. Capital B is expanding into Gary, Indiana as part of the [Indiana Local News Initiative](#).
- [Story Bank Project](#) of the [Focus Action Network](#), detailed ideas for policy-oriented human interest news stories, featuring local community members, that may be used by local media outlets, including print, online, broadcast TV and radio, in the presidential battleground states. (Note: No updates posted since 2023.)
- [Parents Together](#) - Independent reporting and commentary on issues that affect kids and families, directed at women and men in non-college educated households.
- The [Rural Democracy Initiative](#)/Communications Cohort field test funds and trains a small set of nonprofits producing about 130 news briefs annually that are then disseminated through the [Public News Service](#), an independent news service distributing high-quality public interest news to rural audiences through a network of 37 state news services, reaching an audience of over 60 million per week primarily on the radio. The RDI also funded a PNS Beat focused on resilience in rural communities, with particular attention to rural jobs and economic opportunity, rural response to climate change, and rural public policy.
- [Beacon Media](#) – A project designed to provide syndicated English and Spanish content with journalistic integrity in/from a variety of progressive voices/sources to existing North Carolina media outlets and build the brand with advertising.

POTENTIAL EFFECT ON MISINFORMATION AND/OR DISINFORMATION:

2. Delivering a Blue Narrative

The largest slice of audiences for these messengers identify as having democratic values and are looking for political news, often from a variety of messengers. The messengers typically develop their own niche and arguments independent of party and campaigns but that reinforce (even if indirectly) a “blue narrative” of topical political issues that can directly contradict misinformation/disinformation.

These listings are illustrative, not exhaustive.

Messengers:

- [David Pakman](#) - The David Pakman Show (TDPS) is one of the most watched independent progressive podcasts and online shows, having launched about 20 years ago. It is one of the most viewed progressive political channels on YouTube.
- [Distill Social](#) - Michigan nonprofit “designed to serve up the bitter truth (with a Michigan focus); on Facebook, X, Bluesky
- [MeidasTouch](#) - “The fastest growing independent news network in the world,” covering breaking news, politics, law and more. “We are unapologetically pro-democracy. Because TRUTH is golden.”
- [Politicsgirl](#) - Simple, digestible explanations of all things American Politics because it's easier to reengage when you know what's going on.
(2M+ followers across platforms)
- [Brian Tyler Cohen](#) - [is an American progressive YouTuber, podcast host, author, political commentator, actor and MSNBC contributor.](#)
- [Popular Information -](#) Newsletter providing granular reporting on events at the local, state and national level that are threatening the public good, generally events inspired by Republican policies or actors.
- [Letters from an American](#) - A nightly newsletter that chronicles current events in the larger context of American history with a focus on the health of American democracy.
- [Robert Reich](#) - Reich operates through virtually every online media and social media platform.
- [V Spehar, Under the Desk News](#) - Creates YouTube explainers on political topics.

Messengers or messenger networks with cultural currency and only indirect alignment with the blue narrative:

- [Harry Sisson](#)
- [Olivia Juliana](#) (both cultural and political currency)
- [Accelerate Change](#) - Catalyze organization, connecting and scaling of digital media properties, influencers and celebrities in cultural media.

Messengers who are political leaders:

- Bernie Sanders - 14 million followers on TikTok
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez - 3 million followers on TikTok; 8 million followers on Instagram

Messengers with grassroots volunteer audiences:

- [Chop Wood, Carry Water](#) - Substack cataloging a variety of strategic political activities available to volunteers
- [Hopium Chronicles](#) - Hopium [Substack] is a rejection of the darkness [Republicans] are trying to spread. It is a way of standing up for our great country and its remarkable people. It is the key to how we win.
- [Today's Edition Newsletter](#) - The [Substack] newsletter started in February 2017 as my effort to provide hope and perspective to my family after the unexpected results of the 2016 election. Over time, my family email was shared among friends and became a community of like-minded citizens devoted to preserving American democracy.

Emerging networks for messengers:

- [Chorus](#) - New business Their goal is to eventually forge self-sustaining advocacy groups and networks, a left-wing answer to the nonprofit Turning Point USA or the media company The Daily Wire on the right. But first they need buy-in — and cash. New York Times
- [Generator Collective](#) - Instagram account for ad hoc messaging
- [Creator Congress](#) - “A project that allows creators at all levels to funnel their advocacy into a space of change and power building.”

Progressive newsrooms/platforms:

- [More Perfect Union](#) - Nonprofit newsroom with a mission is to build power for working people. We report on the real struggles and challenges of the working class from a working-class perspective, and we attempt to connect those problems to potential solutions. We report on the abuses and wrongdoing of corporate power, and we seek to hold accountable the ultra-rich who have too much power over America’s political and economic systems.
- [Resolute Square](#) - “Creators, thinkers, strategists, and activists committed to taking on the autocrats and their right-wing media mouthpieces to defend democracy through podcasts, streaming programming, newsletters, articles, town halls, public and virtual community gatherings, and strategy calls with people who have led the biggest campaigns - and won.”
- [Crooked Media](#) - An American progressive political media company.
- [NowThis Media](#) -An American progressive social media-focused media organization that specializes in creating short-form videos for young adults.

POTENTIAL EFFECT ON MISINFORMATION AND/OR DISINFORMATION:

3. Direct Counter-Messaging

These organizations organize direct responses by individuals/groups to discrete instances of misinformation, scale messaging (“getting louder,” “building our own megaphone,” or becoming “information warriors”), and/or equip individuals to assess the validity of information.

- [DemCast](#) – Through frequent text and social media notifications, motivates and supports a variety of forms of social media messaging and counter-messaging by tens of thousands of activists. Demcast postings are now available through [Reach](#).
- [Indivisible Truth Brigade](#) – Several thousand volunteers trained and supported by national Indivisible to counter-message on trending misinformation topics.
- [Civic Listening Corps](#) – Volunteer network of individuals trained to report misinformation on diverse topics such as elections, public health, civil rights. (Note: Last updated in 2023.)
- [Disinformation Defense League](#) - League of organizations with a professional staff that warns of racialized disinformation campaigns and provides counter-messaging advice.
- [FactsFirstUSA](#) - Bipartisan group attempting to ensure that national discourse is grounded in facts and honest debate.
- [Real Voices Media](#) - Gives people the skills to stay in touch with their personal networks on social media, and to share stories with their neighbors, friends and family.
- “News literacy” education programs that “inoculate” those encountering misinformation. A [program has just been mandated for New Jersey schools](#) and one is already being [used in Finland](#) (where it is sufficiently widespread to be categorized as “suppressive”). [A News Literacy Project](#) has developed and promotes classroom resources for U.S. schools.
- [Better Internet Initiative](#): A small group of digital creators and professionals who help creators and influencers make educational content for their audiences about issues of importance.

POTENTIAL EFFECT ON MISINFORMATION AND/OR DISINFORMATION:

4. Suppressive

Goals are changes in the legal environment or economic conditions that are conducive to the creation and/or spread of mis/disinformation.

- Much of the potential for social media to be a vehicle for disinformation is created by the profit-motivated use of algorithms that feed increasingly extreme content to produce consumer engagement in social media. [The potential salutary effects of regulating algorithms is considerable and there is no legal barrier to doing so.](#) Yet no proposal to regulate algorithms has been noted.
- Big picture, the outsized scale of disinformation in U.S. media is [directly connected to its overcommercialization paired with underinvestment in public media](#), both as compared to every other developed democracy. A [Build Back Better](#) plan to fund local news outlets died with the death of the proposed BBB legislation. There is also no sign of current mobilization for [Advocacy for “Local News Dollars.”](#) vouchers to support local media outlets. One small initiative does seem to be in operation: [New Jersey](#)

Civic Information Consortium - Public funding is provided to projects that address “the growing problem of news deserts and misinformation.”

- [Smartmatic](#) and [Dominion](#) defamation lawsuits involving Fox “News” and its promotion of false claims about election fraud.
- [Petition to the Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#) to determine that Fox Corporation has demonstrated such bad corporate character in management of Fox News that its broadcast TV licenses should not be renewed.
- Federal legislation proposing changes to [Sec. 230 of Communications Decency Act that would eliminate carve-out of online platforms from being considered “publishers.”](#) and associated [Supreme Court cases](#) relating to social media outlets and their responsibility for false content.
- [UnFoxMyCableBox](#) – A [Media Matters for America \(MMFA\)](#)-affiliated website on which data submitted by TV bundle-subscribers can indicate interest in Fox-News-free bundles; MMFA indicates that it will use these data to pressure companies providing TV bundles to satisfy this consumer demand when the companies negotiate contracts with Fox Corp., parent of Fox “News,” contracts that provide the vast majority of the channel’s revenue.